

BACKGROUND:

Insecticide treated nets (ITNs) have been proved as one of the most effective ways of reducing malaria morbidity and mortality in children and pregnant women. Proper use and care of insecticide treated nets reduce malaria health risk to children.

OBJECTIVE:

To determine maternal use of insecticide treated nets in the prevention of malaria among children under five years in Nyamira district.

DESIGN:

Cross-sectional, descriptive study.

SETTING:

Eight health centres in Nyamira district.

SUBJECTS:

Four hundred mothers bringing their children aged five years and below to the child health clinics between August and October 2003.

RESULTS:

There was very low usage of mosquito nets (33.8%) with the proportion of under five using bed nets and insecticide treated nets being 33.3% and 23.8% respectively. The possibility of a mother having an insecticide treated net was significantly related with the level of education of the mother ($p = 0.003$), occupation ($p = 0.001$) and knowledge ($p = 0.000$). Among the reasons given by mothers regarding non usage of insecticide treated nets included lack of money, they were expensive, ignorance and carelessness.

CONCLUSION:

There was low use of ITNs (23.8%) among children. There is need for health information, education and communication campaigns to sensitise the mothers on most risk groups from malaria so as to create awareness of who needed more protection through use of ITNs. There is need for ITNs intervention projects for malaria prevention in the area.